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REMARKS

Applicant confirms the election of Group 1, Claims 1-12 and 18-20. Claims 1-20 were pending in the present Application. Claims 13-17 have been canceled and Claims 1, 5, and 18 amended, leaving Claims 1-12 and 18-20 for consideration in the present amendment. Applicant appreciates the careful review of the application and the indication that Claims 3, 4, 9-12 and 19 are patentable if rewritten in independent form.

Support for the amendments can be found at least in Figures 2 and 3 and the detailed description of those Figures. Moreover, it is noted that amendments were made for clarification and are not intended to limit the scope of the claims.

Reconsideration and allowance of the claims are respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1-2, 5-8, 18 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,345,884 to Longiny et al. (hereinafter "Longiny"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

To anticipate a claim, a reference must disclose each and every element of the claim. *Lewmar Marine v. Barient Inc.*, 3 U.S.P.Q.2d 1766 (Fed. Cir. 1987).

Longiny fails to anticipate Applicant's claims, because there is no disclosure of an apparatus including the feature of a "movable shaft support providing an upward force on said shaft" as in independent Claims 1 and 5 or of the method that includes the feature of "selectively exerting an upward force against said shaft during said periods of non use thereby off-loading bearings normally supportive of said shaft" as in Claim 18. Rather, as noted by the Examiner, Longiny teaches the use of a threaded shaft upon which a nut is fastened to lock the shaft in place against a top coupling plate 83 (see Longiny, Col. 5 at ll. 53-60, and Figure 1). However, as discussed in Longiny at Col. 4, ll. 54-65, during operation of the drive mechanism, which includes the nut 84 and a coupling plate 83, the entire drive mechanism

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including the nut and coupling plate rotate at the same speed as the hollow drive shaft. Longiny's nut and threaded shaft portion merely adjusts the vertical position of an output shaft relative to a motor (see Col.4, ll. 5-10) and the force exerted by the nut is static and non-selective. Moreover, it is disclosed that bolts 94 must first be removed between the coupling plate 83 and the nut 84 before any adjustment to the nut and the vertical position of the output shaft relative to the motor can be made. Because of this, there is no disclosure of a movable shaft support for exerting an upward force on the shaft nor a process that selectively provides the force as claimed by Applicant.

In view of the foregoing, the rejection of Claims 1, 5, and 18 are requested to be withdrawn. Given that Claims 2, 6-8 and 20 depend from one of these independent claims and include all of features therein, these claims are patentable for at least the same reasons.

It is believed that the foregoing amendments and remarks fully comply with the Office Action and that the claims herein should now be allowable to Applicants. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance are requested.

If there are any additional charges with respect to this Amendment or otherwise, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 06-1130.

Respectfully submitted,

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